WHAT THE HOLY BIBLE SAYS ABOUT CARNAL SINS

HOLY MONASTERY OF STAVROVOUNI

"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, even as it is becoming to saints" (Ephesians 5:3).

"Keep on fleeing fornication…for ye were bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:18, 20)

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"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28)

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Ιερά Μονή Σταυροβουνίου Κύπρου,
Η ΑΓΙΑ ΓΡΑΦΗ ΓΙΑ ΤΑ ΣΑΡΚΙΚΑ ΑΜΑΡΤΗΜΑΤΑ
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For many years, the Venerable Holy Monastery of Stavrovouni in Cyprus, a Spiritual Lighthouse and stronghold of Orthodoxy, has been publishing the theological and patristic worthy periodical entitled *THE LIFE-GIVING CROSS*.

With the permission and blessing of the Holy Monastery, we [Orthodox Kypseli] have deemed it particularly appropriate to republish a serious study in a special issue on the destructive rise of carnal sins and unnatural deviations.

This topical treatise was published in three instalments in the periodical *THE LIFE-GIVING CROSS*, issues 79-80 of 1992, 95-97 of 2007, and 98-100 of 2009. It is now republished to protect all who want to be saved from the fiery blaze of carnal perdition.

After God, we express our warm gratitude to the toilsome, venerable fathers of the Monastery for their practical love for the people of God. Their contribution is significant for the correct information, spiritual armour, and achievement of evangelical and patristic spirituality in the times of great general apostasy, insensitivity, and impenitence that we have become, not excluding most so-called Orthodox Christians.

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God's Condemnation of Carnal Sins Before His Written Law Was Even Given

There are many relevant passages in both the Old and New Testaments where God, both by **His word** and by **His works**, severely rebukes all fleshly sins in their full spectrum and, on the other hand, commands the avoidance of fleshly sins as one of the essential prerequisites for entering the Kingdom of Heaven!

From ancient times, **before the written Law of God was even given**, godly people knew how vile and hateful the sins of the flesh are to God. And they knew this either because there was the successive oral teaching that began with the first-created or because of the exemplary punishments sent by God throughout history for carnal sins (such as the global flood in the time of Noah or the supernatural destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah), or because of the innate moral law, or even from the divine illumination that the righteous people of God had directly in their hearts.

The Global Flood and the Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

Already in the time of Noah, God destroyed an entire generation of people with a **flood of water** for the excessive “flooding” of their souls by carnal mind. God said of that generation of people: “My Spirit will not remain in them forever, for they have become flesh”! (Gen. 6:3). And when, later, people progressed from **the "excessive" indulgence in carnal sins** (fornication), which prevailed in the time of Noah, to the **"excessive excess"** (unnatural relations, immorality, homosexuality), which prevailed in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, God destroyed these cities also in the "excessive" manner, that is, with **a supernatural flood of fire!** (Gen. 19:24; 2 Pet. 2:6-11; Jude 7). Whereas, for the “natural” carnal sins that flooded the world in the time of Noah, God sent the “natural” punishment with a flood of rain (and the rain of water is a “natural phenomenon”), for the “unnatural” carnal sins that flooded the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, God sent the “unnatural” punishment with a “flood” of rain of fire (and the rain of fire is a “supernatural phenomenon” – so that just as the Sodomites overturned the terms of nature, in a

similar way God overturned the method of punishment!).

In an indicative manner (that is, to be an eternal "example to avoid"), God destroyed the world in the time of Noah, and again, **in an indicative manner**, He destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. God gave, on the one hand, an **emphatic example** of His aversion to Carnal Sins and, on the other hand, an **emphatic example** of the punishment (not only in the present life but mainly and ultimately in the future life!), which awaits the unrepentant man, who persists in his carnal downfalls. The Apostle Peter writes in this regard - "And God reduced the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, condemning them to everlasting destruction, as an example of punishment for those who in the future would live ungodly" (2 Pet. 2:6) and "God reserves judgment and condemnation for those who walk "after the flesh," that is, who manifest carnal desire, which defiles and defiles" (2 Pet. 2:10). Regarding the **exemplary meaning** and **exemplary character** of the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah, the holy Apostle Jude also writes the following: “Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, having given themselves over to fornication and ‘going after strange flesh’ (i.e. falling into unnatural debauchery), were destroyed by fire, so that they may remain before our eyes **an example of eternal punishment**, namely, what will be the eternal fire of Hell for unrepentant sinners” (Jude, 7).

Both the destruction of the world by the flood in the time of Noah and the destruction of Sodom and

Gomorrah are, according to the Fathers, **prefiguration of eschatological punishment** due to the Sins of the flesh, which will be in great abundance during the "End Times."

The Case of Saint Joseph the All-Comely

During these times, that is, before the written Law of God was even given, we have a very moving and eternal example of aversion to carnal sins: the well-known story of Joseph the All-Comely, son of Jacob, who was sold as a slave to Potiphar, the cook of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Joseph was trapped, as is well known, by Potiphar's wife and had to face the relentless dilemma: **Either** he would commit carnal sin with her, in which case he would additionally gain many other worldly benefits (positions and money), which would make him great and powerful in the eyes of men, or he would refuse to fall into carnal sin, at the direct cost of being slandered, humiliated, and imprisoned! One choice was the affirmation of carnal sin with the added "benefit" of satisfying all human selfishness (love of pleasure, ambition and avarice). The other choice was the denial of carnal sin, at the price not only of the denial of carnal pleasure but also of the additional "cost" of insults, humiliation and enslavement. And yet! Three centuries before the written Law of God was even delivered to Moses and 18 centuries before God Himself became incarnate in order to deliver Himself to us Himself personally (both with His most holy Life and with His inimitable Teaching) the supreme Law of extreme purity from all

carnal sin, we are presented with the wonderful example of the truly all-good Joseph, who **preferred to deny the fall into carnal sin** (along with all the consequential "benefits" for that case and to simultaneously bear all the painful "costs" of his denial), **rather than commit such a sin before the eyes of the all-seeing God!** Having a deep awareness of God's omnipresence and also knowing how abominable carnal sin is to God, Joseph said to the woman who provoked him to fall: **"How can I commit this wicked deed and sin in the sight of God?"** (Gen. 39:9).

Joseph's refusal to sin cost him, in the short term, the well-known adventure of his imprisonment. In the long term, however, God rewarded him for his purity! He glorified him on earth and made him second only to Pharaoh! He glorified him in Heaven, where he shines forever like a bright star in the Kingdom of God! Our Orthodox Church celebrates his holy memory every Holy Monday, reciting - "Jacob mourned the loss of Joseph, but his righteous son was seated on a chariot and honoured as a king. **For he was not enslaved to the pleasures of Egypt, but he was glorified by God who sees the hearts of men and bestows on them an incorruptible crown!**" (Kontakion of Holy Monday).

Lesson from Job

In the years before the written Law was given, there lived the famous and long-suffering Job. He lived 2000 years before Christ, and it should be noted that he was not even a Jew! However, he had divine illumination in his heart because he was righteous and loved God. And Job confesses about himself that he considered it **impermissible** to sin with a foreign woman, saying that, **just as it is impermissible for my wife to sin with another man, so it is impermissible for me to sin with another woman!** Job says in this regard, "If ever my heart has been seduced by another man's wife, if ever I have lurked with wicked intentions at the door of her house, then the opposite would also be permissible: That is, let my lawful wife resort to another man and let my little children suffer the consequences of such degradation. (That is, just as it is not permissible for my wife to commit such a sin, in the same way, such a sin is not permissible for me either)." (Job 31:9-10). We do not know how many of the baptised Orthodox Christians realise these words, which were spoken 2000 years before Christ!

The righteous Job condemns the act of adultery, even saying the following: "When a man defiles another man's wife, **then the anger of the Lord is unquenchable. And adultery is like a fire that burns on all sides. It destroys from the foundations"** (Job 31:11-12). Knowing how great the commission of carnal sin is in the sight of God; the righteous Job is

quick to condemn not only **the act itself** but also the reasons (i.e. the pretexts) that lead to it! He himself confesses that **he even guards his eyes** so that he does not look evilly with carnal desire! He says in this regard: **"I made a covenant with my eyes that I would not allow myself to look with sinful desire at a virgin. And what is the punishment that God has in store for those who look with sinful desires? Do you not know that God has destruction and alienation (from fellowship with Him) in store for those who commit such sins?"** (Job 31, 1-3).

These were said by Job not only **20 centuries before the God-man Christ came to earth** but also before the written Law of God was even given to Moses! And yet today, **20 centuries after the incarnation of our Savior Christ,** baptised Orthodox Christians appear who not only condone or even bless **eye fornication** (which in our days has reached its extreme limits since the creation of the world, with entirely undisguised nudity and the unstoppable daily flood of pornographic magazines and films) but also overlook or even promote with various sophistries and pretexts **every deadly carnal sin** of the flesh, such as, for example, **premarital relations, homosexuality, extramarital relations,** etc. The Church calls all these sins MORTAL (or DEADLY) because they are an abomination before God; therefore, even if there was no Repentance, Confession, or Correction, they lead to eternal death!

God's Condemnation of Carnal Sins by His Written Law in the Years of the Old Testament

And when God later gave His written Law to Moses, He clearly and completely indisputably **legislated in writing** the complete abstinence from Sins of the Flesh! God commands with His Law: "You shall not commit adultery" (Exod. 20:13). And he even commands: "There shall be no prostitute among the Israelites, and there shall be no adulterer among the Israelites!" (Deut. 23:18). And in fact, God required people to observe the Commandment to avoid carnal sins in the Old Testament years **on pain of death!** God commands that those who commit **serious carnal sins**, such as acts of adultery, fornication, sodomy, bestiality, and incest, be put to death (see Lev. 20:10-24 and Deut. 22:20-28). It is evident that God wants, in this way**, on the one hand,** to demonstrate in the most emphatically and categorically His complete abhorrence and disgust for carnal sins and**, on the other hand,** to uproot these sins from His people!!!

By His Law, God condemns the murderer to death. However, He also condemns the fornicator, the adulterer, and the man who sleeps with men to death!

It is, therefore, obvious that the one who commits serious carnal sins is so guilty before God that he is punished with the same punishment that the murderer is condemned to! The taking of human life is terrible and abhorrent. And yet it is noteworthy that God imposed through His Law during the Old Testament years the taking of life to **punish** and **eliminate** fornication, adultery, homosexuality and every other grave sin of the flesh from His people!

* And if God demanded **such purity** from the "Old Israel" that He punished with death to eliminate every form of grave sin of the flesh from His people, is it self-evident how much **more purity** He demands now, in the years of the New Testament, from His new people, the people of Grace, that is, the baptised Orthodox Christians, who make up His Church? And this **greater purity** is what Christ clearly demands, as is concluded from His own words in His Sermon on the Mount! (Matt. 5:27-29).

* And if God punished with BIOLOGICAL DEATH those who fell into serious carnal sins in the years of the Old Testament, however, the word of the Gospel now, in the years of Grace, categorically and indisputably warns that something infinitely worse than this "biological death" will happen to those who **unrepentantly** persist in carnal sins: That is, it is possible that not only serious and painful illnesses (even fatal), crimes of all kinds (murders and suicides), as well as other painful consequences due to carnal sins, will occur, but above all, what is called by the New Testament the SECOND DEATH will also occur,

that is, the definitive, eternal and irrevocable separation from God at the terrible hour of Judgment! (See 1 Cor. 6:9-10, Gal. 5:19-21, Eph. 5:5-6, Col. 3:5-6, etc.)

From this perspective, the punitive "biological death" in the Old Law, as well as the most painful illnesses due to Sins of the Flesh, many of which have now first appeared in the years of Grace, are in a way **prefiguration** of the "Second Death," which will happen definitively and irrevocably at the time of Judgment to those who **unrepentantly** persist and remain in mortal falls and sins, among which the word of God clearly includes Sins of the Flesh.

Teachings from the God-inspired books of the Old Testament.

In this chapter, we will give a sample of some teachings from the God-inspired books of the Old Testament, where the word of God condemns carnal sins.

From the Book of "Psalms"

The PSALMIST, addressing God, says – "Behold! Those who depart from You will perish. **You have destroyed from before You all who commit fornication!**" (Ps. 72:27). In other words, fornication is separation from God. This separation indeed leads to destruction and annihilation!

From the Book of "Proverbs"

In the book of PROVERBS of the Old Testament, God condemns adultery, saying, "Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being burned? So, he who commits adultery with a married woman will not go unpunished. And he who touches a married woman will not go unpunished either!" (Proverbs 6:28-29). In other words, not only is the great fall of the flesh a sin, **but even this guilty touch** is a sin! And Solomon wrote these things under the inspiration of God 1000 years before Christ came to earth! How much greater

caution is therefore necessary today, in the age of Grace, 2000 years after the coming of the God-man to earth! And, of course, not only adultery with a married woman but also every act of fornication, in general, is condemned by God, warning even from those times of the Old Testament: “Do not pay attention with sinful desire to a wicked woman. For seemingly ‘honey’ drips from the lips of a harlot woman, which for a short time only pleases your throat. But afterwards, you will find this ‘honey’ more bitter than gall! And you will find it like a sharp sword and sharpened more than a two-edged sword! **For the steps of fools who go to fornication lead them to death and Hades.** Their steps have no support; they slip continually downhill”! (Proverbs 5:3-5).

In the same book of Proverbs, the fall of the flesh is condemned not only as an **act** but also as **a sinful desire** and **a sinful look**. It writes in this regard - "Beware lest **the desire** for a woman's beauty overcome you, lest you be caught in her nets by **your careless eyes,** lest you be captivated by **her painted eyelids**" (Proverbs 6:25). If, therefore, in the “Old Israel” God categorically condemns adultery and fornication, and not only as an act but also as a lust of the eyes and as a sinful thought and as a carnal desire, how much more does He forbid all of these in the “New Israel,” that is, baptised Orthodox Christians from whom, as is well known, the Lord demands a much more spiritual life and a much greater purity of life than He demanded from the “Old Israel”! (cf. Matt. 5:27-32).

There are many other passages in the book of Proverbs where carnal sins are condemned. We mention, by way of example, some of these:

In the passage Prov. (5, 11), it is pointed out that because of carnal sin, **the health of the body deteriorates**, and "the flesh of the body rots!" That is, we have a reference to the so-called "venereal diseases," the culmination of which is, of course, the terrible disease that plagues our pansexual era, namely the AIDS virus! A similar reference to the causation of physical diseases due to carnal sin exists in the book of PSALMS, where the prophet David mentions his unspeakable sorrows due to his simple sin, namely, **adultery**, which subsequently led him to commit **murder**. (Something similar happens in our day, where acts of adultery and fornication often push people to commit a second terrible crime, abortion, which is also an indisputable crime of murder.)

So, David says about the painful consequences on the body because of his sin: "**Your arrows, O Lord, have entered my body, and so your hand is heavy upon me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of your anger against me. Nor do my bones find rest because of my sins.** For my two transgressions are so great that they have gone over my head, and like a heavy burden they press down on my soul. Because of my great foolishness, **the wounds on my body have become foul and rotten** because of my sin. Therefore, I am a wretched and afflicted man, bowed down completely…" (Ps. 37:3-7).

In the passage Proverbs (5:12-14), reference is made to the remorse of conscience and the loss of inner peace due again to the sins of the flesh.

In the passage Proverbs (5:15-19), it is emphasised that any sexual relationship outside the boundaries of marriage is impermissible.

In the passage Proverbs (5:21-23), it is emphasised that God severely punishes impure desires. The all-seeing God "sees all things"; therefore, attention is drawn to this additional reason for which every sin of the flesh must be avoided. It is also pointed out that the sinner, in general, and especially the immoral person, who indulges in carnal passions, is trapped and clasped hand and foot by his own transgressions until he ends up in death. He who indulges in fornication squanders the wealth of his property in a wasteful manner and is ultimately destroyed because of his foolishness.

In the passage Proverbs (6:30-33), the God-inspired writer declares that the sin of adultery is much worse than the sin of theft. Indeed, the adulterer destroys what is most honourable so that only one who has lost his mind can consent to commit such a sin!

In the passage Proverbs (7, 4-5), the wise writer presents the spiritual allurements of divine Wisdom as a counterweight to the deceptive allurements of the harlot woman. Therefore, he advises, “Call Wisdom your sister and have Prudence as your constant companion. And in this way, you will be able to keep

yourself pure from a strange and vicious woman when she attacks you with her harlotry's sweet words"!

The one who becomes a slave to carnal passions is likened in the passage Proverbs (7, 22-27) to an "owl" and to an "ox that goes to the slaughter to be slaughtered," to "a dog that is led to be tied with a chain," to a "bird that falls into a trap," to a "deer that has been wounded in the flank with a bow." And he concludes: "Yes, the house (where fornications take place) is a road that leads to Hades. It is a road leading to the caves of death (both biological and spiritual)."

Elsewhere, again, the deceitful mouth of the lustful young man or woman is likened to a "deep pit" (Prov. 22:14).

In describing the places of lust, the wise author points out that suspicious and ill-famed houses, "foreign" to the lawful wife, are holes without substantial content, and it is impossible to give real satisfaction to those who resort to them.

They resemble "vessels full of holes" from which it is impossible to draw water! Moreover, whoever is trapped inside these vessels finds it difficult to free themselves because the "hole-filled vessels" outlet is narrow! (Proverbs 23, 26).

From the Book "Wisdom of Solomon"

In the book of WISDOM OF SOLOMON, the God-inspired author, speaking with aversion about carnal

sins, considers them to be passions of those people who live far from the true God, that is, idolaters. And he says that these people "have neither a pure life nor pure marriages" but live "in a filth-mixture", with **"mental defilements, sodomite sins, marital disorder, adultery and lewdness"** (Wisdom of Solomon 14:26). If all these sins are suitable, according to the inspired word of the Wisdom of Solomon, only for idolaters and were considered entirely unacceptable even in the years of the Old Testament, how is it possible today, in the years of Grace, that such sins are named among baptised Orthodox Christians? How is it possible today that there are faithful Christians who overlook or even forgive all these sins, which are abominations even for idolaters?

From the Book of Ecclesiastes

In the book of ECCLESIASTES, the wise Solomon advises young people with these words: "Rejoice, my young man, in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart. **But do not sin, nor follow the sight of your eyes; for God will bring you into judgment for all your actions"** (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

From the Book "Wisdom of Sirach."

In the book of the Old Testament, entitled WISDOM OF SIRACH, the God-inspired author (190-170 BC) condemns carnal sins in many and various ways.

In the passage of Wisdom of Sirach (23, 16-18), three categories of Carnal Sins are listed in order, from the lightest cases to the most serious. First, **carnal desire** is condemned (Sir. 23, 17a), then carnal action without another person is condemned, namely **masturbation** (Sir. 23, 17b) and finally, carnal action with another person is condemned, namely **fornication** and **adultery** (Sir. 2, 17c-18). In this regard, Sirach writes: “Two groups of people commit a multitude of (carnal) sins. And a third group arouses (with their carnal sins) the wrath of God.”

(The **first group** consists of those people whose) soul is heated by a carnal passion to the point that it becomes like a burning fire whose flame does not say to be extinguished unless it first burns this soul.

(The **second group** includes those) people who **fornicate in their own body** ("fornication in the body of his own flesh", obviously with the sin of masturbation, or "by himself", or self-satisfaction) and who will not cease this sin of theirs before the fire that fuels it is consumed.

(The **third group** includes those who fornicate and commit adultery.) Every (tempting) foreign flesh appears to the person who fornicates as supposedly pleasant. This man (if he does not repent) will not cease to sin until he dies. And the man who abandons his marital bed and commits adultery with a strange woman, saying in his heart, “Who sees me now? Darkness is all around me, and the walls cover me, and no one sees me. Why should I fear? The Most High (as

He is very merciful) will not remember my sins (on the day of Judgment)."

(Unfortunately) this man fears only the eyes of men and has not learned that the eyes of the Lord are ten thousand times brighter than the sun and see all the ways of men and know well all the secret works of men... The fornicator and the adulterer will be punished publicly (and indeed on the Day of Judgment), and where they think they are secure, they will be suddenly caught (and punished) ... "**Let men therefore learn that there is nothing sweeter than to heed the commandments of God!"** (Sirach 23, 16-19 and 23, 21 and 23, 27).

Referring to another point on the Sins of the Flesh in Sirach, he writes the following: "Wine and women separate from God even those who are considered wise. But he who clings to prostitutes becomes even more shameless. Rust and worms will inherit the former (for whoever falls into carnal passions is in danger of deadly diseases, where worms are responsible on the one hand for his body, and rust for his goods on the other), but also the shameless soul of the latter (the fornicator) will be removed from life (i.e. he will be punished both in the present life and after death the sufferings there will await him) (Sirach 19, 2-3).

In his prayer to God, the God-inspired author of Sirach **reaches to the roots** of carnal sins. For this reason, he asks that **even the causes** that lead to carnal falls, such as lust of the eyes, sinful desire, and

gluttony, be uprooted from his soul. So, he says in his prayer: "Lord, Father and God of my life, do not allow me to have careless eyes. And remove sinful desire from me. (Help) that gluttony and the carnal desire for intercourse do not overwhelm me. Do not allow me to be overcome by shamelessness (to which a man who is overcome by carnal passions ends up) (Sirach 23:4-6).

The God-inspired author of Sirach does not content himself with condemning carnal sin as an **act** but gives apt spiritual advice so that the carnal fall can be prevented "at its inception," that is, even the **occasions** that can lead to it can be eliminated. Therefore, to eliminate even these occasions, which are usually prerequisites for carnal, sinful acts, Sirach advises: "Do not seek meetings with a woman of ill repute, for Do not be caught in her nets. Do not associate with a singer, for there is a fear of being trapped by her pretence and tricks. Do not look with sinful eyes at a virgin girl, lest you end up entangled in the punishments that the carnal fall entails with her. Do not give yourself over to prostitution, lest you lose your inheritance (i.e. the Kingdom of Heaven). Do not cast your gaze here and there on the city's streets (lest you fall into temptation) - and do not wander in its deserted places (where guilty encounters occur). Turn your eyes away from a beautiful woman, and do not look at the beauty of a stranger. For by women's beauty, many men have been led astray. And the love that arises from this beauty is like a destructive fire. Do not sit with a married woman at all, and never come to revelry and drinking with her, lest your soul

be influenced by her and you slip and be destroyed" (Sirach 9, 3-9).

The Wise Sirach, although he lived in the pre-Christian era, i.e., in the "climate" of the Mosaic Law and outside the pre-eminent space of Grace (i.e. the Church of Christ), nevertheless points out, under divine inspiration, the broad spectrum of Fleshly Sins, which begins with carnal desire and ends either in "alone" sin or in an even much worse result, namely in carnal action together with another person, which, according to the expression of the Wise Sirach, "arouses the wrath of God." The divinely inspired author emphasises the terrible consequences in the present life and those in the future life for those who commit carnal sins without repenting. Considering how abominable these sins are to God; he deems it necessary to cite many examples of motives and causes that can lead to such falls so that people may be corrected and distance themselves from these causes and motives. He strikes evil at its root, pointing out the painful consequences of lustful eyes and the internal sinful desire. And while the Wise Sirach, speaking under divine inspiration, lists, two centuries before Christ came to earth, all of the above, regarding the destructive consequences of carnal sins—and even points out the roots of evil which must be eradicated from the life of every person who loves the true God and who strives for his salvation—nevertheless today, 20 centuries after the coming of the God-man himself to earth, there are baptised Orthodox Christians, who even declare themselves "conscious" and "struggling",

to pardon carnal sins, to push people towards fornication and the masturbation, to "justify" premarital or even homosexual relationships, without being ashamed of what they proclaim publicly (and primarily through the media), without fearing God and without caring about the souls of uneducated people who they push with mathematical precision to eternal death!

Practical Examples of Condemnation of Carnal Sins in the Books of the Old Testament

We have already mentioned that God confirmed and sealed His clear aversion to carnal sins with His Law and His Works. From the many cases, we will mention some characteristic examples in the God-inspired Old Testament books.

The Case of Phinehas

First, let us recall the shocking example of Phinehas, who punished a shameful act of prostitution that occurred between the Israelite Zimri and the Midianite woman Cozbi with murder. And God not only did not condemn this murder committed by Phinehas, but He considered it a just murder and the fruit of divine zeal. He even rewarded Phinehas for this act with the office of "eternal priesthood!" Murder is a terrible sin. It is even a violation of the Eighth Commandment of the Decalogue. And yet! The punitive murder committed by Phinehas to condemn a shameful sin of the flesh was not only not considered reprehensible by God but, on the contrary, worthy of praise!!! It is therefore self-evident that God's

abhorrence of the sin of fornication, in the specific example of Phinehas, the act of murder was not only "pardoned" but literally "enlisted" to punish something that God considered to be worse than murder!

The Case of Judge Samson

God chose Judge Samson (1200 BC) from when he was still in his mother's womb! With his dedication to God, his unwavering faith in Him and the divine help from on high, he proved to be a legendary hero of Israel with amazing and superhuman feats. For example, He defeated a wild lion with his own two hands. He defied an untamed swarm of wild bees with admirable dispassion. He burned down, without the help of another human being, all the crops of the enemies of Israel, using some foxes cleverly and skillfully. When 3,000 men captured him, he broke his bonds without much difficulty to free himself. With a single jawbone from a dead donkey, he single-handedly defeated a thousand brave Philistine men. These and similar feats were the exploits of Judge Samson, who was dedicated to God "from the womb." **And yet! Despite all His accomplishments, His carnal passion and His fall into fleshly sin alone were enough for Him to lose all His supernatural gifts literally! And not only that but also to collapse sharply and crush this hitherto invincible and charismatic man of God mercilessly!!!**

We are reminded from the Holy Bible that Judge Samson, although he was a “Nazir” (= dedicated to God), was nevertheless trapped by carnal passion. And

because of this, his passion ended up causing him to fall from the Zenith of his glory to the Nadir of his humiliation! His carnal sin (fornication) alone was enough for Judge Samson to lose everything!!! To waste all the rich grace with which God had abundantly endowed him and, as an inevitable consequence, to fall into the abyss of slavery! Trapped by his carnal passion, he betrayed to the harlot Delilah the secret "Sign" of his divine dedication. He gave "the holy things to her." He was first "captured" by mortal passion, "blinded" and "enslaved" to it, and, in turn, he was also captured by his mortal enemies, the Philistines, who blinded him, imprisoned him, humiliated him and made him their laughingstock! This was the heaviest price of carnal sin, which, to be able to pay for, he had first to suffer, be crushed, repent from the depths, rise up, be able to pray with a prayer that is acceptable to God, and finally wash away his carnal falls with the heroic sacrifice of his own life! So painful is the price of carnal sin! Thus, Samson paid the "Canona" that the Lord Himself imposed on him for his enslavement to carnal passion! Sinful pleasure is paid for with unimaginable pain!

* * *

The word "Delilah," translated into Greek, means: "one who destroys something after having previously melted it". Indeed, in the person of the harlot Delilah, who seduced Judge Samson into sin, fornication itself was represented in the most graphic way, which destroys man not only morally **but also ontologically** after having previously separated him from God!

If Judge Samson fell, yet he lived 1200 years before Christ came to earth, he repented bitterly for his passion and sin, was forgiven by God and was restored to his former glory “in the tents of the righteous.” But today, 2000 years after the coming of Christ to earth, who also gave us His perfect teaching on these matters, what excuse will we have on the terrible Day of Judgment if we continue **to live unrepentantly** and **become dangerously complacent** in the whirlpool of the miasma of the carnal sins of our pansexual era?

The Case of Saint Susanna

The touching story of Susanna, who lived in the 5th century BC and is described in the book of the prophet Daniel, is also very instructive.

The most honourable wife of Joachim, Susanna, was trapped in a satanic way by two "elders" of the Jews in the garden of her house. And they put her before a relentless dilemma: Either she would succumb to carnal sin with them, or they would slander her, even with sworn testimony, that they had caught her committing adultery with an unknown young man, who supposedly managed to escape. These elders, as officials of Judaism, had the easy opportunity to bring her to trial with this dishonourable accusation and condemn her to death!

Susanna fully felt the magnitude of the dilemma: Either give in to a carnal fall so that the whole affair would end invisibly or deny it, in which case she

would suffer all the unspeakable mental pain of a sworn slander, ending in death! **But Susanna was aware of how abhorrent the commission of carnal sin is in the eyes of God! And she preferred to endure the adventure of dishonour in the eyes of men rather than to commit adultery in the eyes of God!!!**

While in our days there is a systematic effort from various directions to pardon carnal sins, **to Susanna's pure conscience, even her humiliation unto death is preferable to her fall into carnal sin!**

Susanna refused to commit adultery and was indeed dragged to court on a false charge. She was sentenced to death and led to execution! But God did not abandon his chosen Susanna. From the crowd watching the events, a divine messenger appeared: the then-young prophet Daniel, who demanded that the trial be repeated. Then the slanderous “elders”, when tested with skilful questions by the prophet Daniel, fell into contradictions. Their plot was revealed, and the truth shone forth. The “elders” were condemned, and Susanna was solemnly acquitted and praised by everyone for her honesty and purity!

For the fact that Susanna preferred death (and even then from disgrace and dishonour) rather than her fall into carnal sin, God rewarded her. Not only in her earthly life but also after death. For, **precisely because of her Purity and her self-sacrificing refusal to give in to the fall of the flesh, she was counted among the Saints of our Church!**

Similar Incidents from the Lives of the Saints

However, whatever God-pleasing things happen in the Holy Bible, this is experienced repeatedly and in various ways, with all greatness and fullness in the life of our holy Church. "Thus, the example of Saint Susanna was the harbinger of a multitude of similar shocking incidents in the life of the Church, where death was preferred to the fall into a sinful act of the flesh! We cite as a sample some such cases from the lives of our saints:

Saint Euphrasia lived in Nicomedia during the years of persecution by Maximian (290 AD). Despite the tortures she suffered from the pagans, she refused to sacrifice to idols and insisted on confessing her faith in the God-Man Christ. For this reason, she was handed over by her tormentors to a barbaric pagan to dishonour her. However, the saint, enlightened by God, devised the following trick, **preferring to die rather than fall (even against her will) into a sinful carnal act:** She promised that barbarian that, if he did not harm her, she would give him in return a supposedly miraculous medicine, which would keep him invulnerable from the blows of an enemy sword or spear. To convince him of the miraculous properties of the supposed medicine, she suggested that he try it first on her neck! And when he was convinced by her words and struck her hard on the neck with his sword,

the saint, as was natural, was beheaded. Thus, she was able to preserve herself pure and undefiled from the profane dispositions of that barbaric idolater and, at the same time, earned the incorruptible crown of martyrdom! God ranked her in the choir of the holy Martyrs, and the Church honours her holy memory on January 19th.

Saint Pelagia lived in Antioch of Syria during the reign of Numerian (284 AD). To avoid being captured by idolatrous soldiers who were sent to capture and dishonour her, **she fervently prayed to Christ to make her worthy not to be captured but to reach God pure and virgin!** Immediately after her prayer, she threw herself down from a high place and delivered her holy soul into the hands of God! Let us note that Saint John Chrysostom composed a most wonderful eulogy for the holy virgin-martyr Pelagia, **who, for her love for Christ, preferred to be torn down and killed rather than have the living temple of God (i.e. her body) desecrated by sinful carnal acts, by those unholy idolatrous soldiers!** In praising Saint Pelagia, Saint Chrysostom writes, among many other things: “Death of martyrs, victory of martyrs” and “Christ is present in the body of the virgin.” Our Church honours her holy memory on October 8.

Saint Philoneides, bishop of Kourion on the island of Cyprus, lived during the years of the persecution of Diocletian (300 AD). Diocletian had then issued a shameful decree, according to which faithful Christians should be blackmailed so that, with the threat of their lives, they would fall into lewd acts with

promiscuous and lustful idolaters. The persecuting tyrant wanted in this way to defile the faithful Christians, corrupting their sanctified bodies by force. When Saint Philoneides, who had already been arrested and was imprisoned in the idolaters' prisons, was informed of this demonic decree of Diocletian and wanting to preserve his virgin body pure from the filthy desires of the impious, he climbed to a high place, prayed fervently to God and threw himself down the cliff. Thus, he delivered his holy soul into the hands of the true God! The astonishing Signs that followed his martyrdom confirmed even to unbelievers the glory and boldness the saint found before God for his admirable deed! His holy memory is celebrated on June 17.

St. Philosophos was from Alexandria and lived during the years of persecution. In order to defile his purity, his vile tormentors tied him on his back to a bed and brought a prostitute woman over to him, who in every way encouraged him to commit carnal sin with her. Let us quote what the Synaxaria of St. Philosophos writes exactly: “But the most valiant fighter of the Lord, although he was bound, nevertheless found a way and a trick to save himself from the snares of the prostitute. For, first, he closed his eyes so that he would not see her. Then he chewed his tongue with his teeth and thus, with the unbearable pains that He tried by biting his tongue, he made the other senses of his body remain insensitive to the carnal pleasure (which the harlot was trying to provoke in him). His mouth filled with blood from the bite of

his tongue. And then he spat this blood on the face and on the dress of that impure and defiled harlot. When the harlot saw the blood flowing like a river from the mouth of the holy martyr, she was afraid and cowered.

"Thus, in this way, that magnanimous saint struggled, and thus he was not defeated, but, by the grace of Christ, he is the one who conquered by preserving his body pure from the fall of the flesh! Afterwards, the tyrants beheaded him and thus crowned he went to heaven, where he enjoys eternal and unspeakable joy." These are described in the life of the Saint. If, in our current "modern" era, carnal sins are presented and considered as insignificant falls or even as ... physical acts, without any spiritual cost, however, in the **eyes of God and in the conscience of his saints, they are considered abominations, to such an extent that the saints prefer horrible martyrdom until death, to preserve clean and pure their body,** which was sanctified with Holy Baptism, which the Lord redeemed with His sacrifice on the Cross, which constitutes a "Temple of God" and which is ontologically a "member of Christ"! Our Church honours the holy memory of the martyr **Philosophos** on May 1.

Many other saints' lives provide similar examples, such as Saint **Thomais**, Saint **Markella**, the holy martyr **Nicetas** (who was martyred during Decius's persecutions), and the holy martyrs **Domnina** and her daughters **Bernice** and **Prosdoke.** In fact, the golden-haired divine Chrysostom chose the most beautiful eulogy for the last three martyrs.

We must never forget that the lives of the Saints of our Church constitute an admirable Interpretation and understandable Memorization of the Holy Scriptures! What God commands in the Holy Bible finds its most straightforward and indisputable interpretation in the lives of the Saints of our Church. So, too, in the matter of Sins of the Flesh, we can find the clear will of God by studying the lives of the Saints!
An

It is also worth remembering the example of the **300 Souliotes women who danced the "Zalongo Dance"** on December 21, 1803, and preferred to be destroyed rather than be conquered. In commemorating these women, His Eminence Metropolitan of Nikopol, Mr. Meletios (Kalamaras), writes the following remarkable words:

"They die voluntarily so as not to defile their souls and bodies!...

Heroes in the spirit of purity and faith in Christ.

Purity is both knowledge and faith. *A woman, say the wise, is raised to heaven only through purity.*

And indeed, can one imagine a woman without chastity, preferring death to the Turkish harem?

The Souliotes women voluntarily put an end to their lives. How should they be judged from a Christian point of view?

Suicide is a mortal sin. He who commits suicide is separated from God because he ends his life with a mortal sin. And without the possibility or hope of correction. That is why those who commit suicide are not buried and are not commemorated by the Church.

But there is an exception. *When a woman commits suicide, so as not to let herself be forcibly turned into a prostitute.* ***Because carnal sin, even if involuntary, defiles a person. And it brings death to the soul.***

Women who commit suicide in order not to allow themselves to be used as whores not only do not sin and are not punished but are honoured. They receive a crown of glory. They are martyrs.

Such martyrs are the holy women ***Bernice*** *and* ***Prosdoke****, young girls who, seeing that they were handed over to an army unit to become instruments of fornication, took advantage of an opportunity that was given to them and threw themselves into the Euphrates and drowned together with their mother, Saint* ***Domnina*** *(October 4, 306 AD).*

Mothers and daughters committed suicide for the same purpose. ***And the Church honours them as martyrs.*** *Their memory is celebrated on October 4. The holy fathers* ***John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome,*** *and others praise them.*

The Souliotes fell on the rocks of Zalongo and thus ended their lives ***for the same reason: so that they***

would not end up in the harems of the Turkish Aggas, instruments of sin.

(Note: To these remarkable words of His Eminence Metropolitan of Nicopolis, let us add the following: **While the MOTIVE of suicide** is extreme despair, extreme unbelief in Christ, and therefore the actual blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (which is why the Church does not bury those who commit suicide, unless there is a reasonable extenuating circumstance, such as mental illness), **the MOTIVE of the holy martyrs who voluntarily rushed to their deaths** was precisely the opposite: immense faith in Christ, unwavering hope in the future life, and the preservation of the Commandments of God until death, and therefore the Glory of the One Triune God. This was the MOTIVE of voluntary sacrifice of the holy Martyrs of Christ! The motivations of "the ones" **are utterly opposite** from the motivations of "the others").

And His Eminence Mr. Meletios continues in his text.

"The Church, with the example of the holy women Domnina, Bernice and Prosdoke, tells us: ***The Souliotes women did excellently! And they should be honoured. And they should be presented as models of modesty and uprightness. Such a great thing is physical purity.***

Every other view, expressed thoughtfully, philosophically, sociologically, or pseudo-theologically (...that supposedly it didn't matter, it

wasn't such a great evil!), is outside the tradition of the Church.

After this, the question arises: Should we start honouring the heroines of Souliotes as "Saints?"

Why not?

At the Intersection of the Old and New Testaments

At the crossroads of the Old and New Testaments lived the Righteous Forerunner. Not only with his ascetic life and his teaching **but even the sacrifice of his own life, the Baptist and Forerunner of our Lord Jesus Christ, Saint John, condemned most intensely the passions of the flesh and the sins of the flesh!!!**

While in our days, "psychologists", "sexologists", etc., are living and demanding, with various pretexts and sophistry, "relaxation of the moral law of the Gospel", **however,** he who was the "greatest among women" according to the word of the Lord, the Forerunner and Baptist of the God-man Christ, the celestial Ascetic and in a crystalline manner a Virgin, the great Prophet and uncompromising Martyr of God, Saint John the Forerunner, **endures without hesitation a martyr's death** by the cutting off of his Honorable Head (a heavy "price", after a proud request, **the result of Salome's harlotry dance**), because he dared with boldness to slander, with severity and godly zeal, the illicit love and adultery of the Tetrarch of Galilee Herod with his relative Herodias, the mother of Salome!

The people of God, the "Saints," abhorred carnal sins so much that t**hey did not hesitate to sacrifice**

their lives to atone for them. The Righteous Forerunner endured even to the point of martyrdom (as did many other saints of our Church) to preserve the Moral Law of the Gospel intact.

However, in our days, we seek a "relaxation" of the Commandments of God to sin "untroubled" (i.e. without remorse of our conscience). "Let us not forget, however, that the Spiritual Law of God is relentless: "The consequences and wages of sin are spiritual death (i.e. separation from God). And the gift of God to those who obey Him is Eternal Life through our Lord Jesus Christ! (Rom. 6:23).

The Condemnation of Carnal Sins in the New Testament

If the Law **“You shall not commit adultery”** (Exod. 20:13) and the Commandment **“There shall be no prostitute among the Israelites, and there shall be no adulterer among the Israelites”** (Deut. 23:18) were given to “old Israel,” **how much more** does the same law apply to the “new Israel,” that is, to baptised Orthodox Christians throughout the world!!!

It is so self-evident by God that for the people of Grace, for faithful Christians, every sinful fleshly act is unthinkable, that the Apostle Paul, writing by divine inspiration to the Thessalonians, informs them - **"YOU KNOW WELL,** after all, what commands and instructions we gave you through our Lord Jesus. And indeed, **this is the will of God: That you become Saints. Therefore, abstain from all acts of fornication and; that each of you should know how to keep his own body under his own authority and dominion in a state of holiness and honour, and that no one should ever allow himself to be dominated by a passion of sinful desire, as the idolatrous nations do who do not know God!"** (1 Thess. 4:2-5).

The same Apostle, writing to the Corinthians, points out, **"Do you not KNOW that those who commit injustice will not inherit the kingdom of**

God? Do not be deceived! Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexual... will inherit the Kingdom of God! (1 Cor. 6:9-10). And again, "**Do you not KNOW that your bodies are members of Christ? Is it possible for me to make them members of a prostitute? MAY IT NOT BE!!!"** (1 Cor. 6:15). And again, **"Do you not KNOW that whoever joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her?"** (1 Cor. 6:16). And again, **"Do you not KNOW that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you, whom you have received from God? And therefore (if you are baptised Orthodox Christians), you are no longer your own (but God's); therefore, it is unthinkable that you should yield your bodies to the sins of the flesh!"** (1 Cor. 6:19).

So, repeatedly, the word of God considers it SELF-EXPLANATORY that Faithful Christians KNOW WELL the moral teaching of the Gospel, which clearly, indisputably and categorically condemns all carnal sins! While Carnal Sins alienate man from God, on the contrary, the struggle that is made with awareness to achieve **purity** from carnal passions and carnal sins is an essential prerequisite for salvation!

The New Testament is not limited only to what the Law of God taught in the years of the Old Testament. The Lord's demands from His new people and faithful followers are now even greater than they were in the years of the Mosaic Law. The undoubted highlight of God's demands from the people of Grace is what the God-man Christ himself categorically said in His

Sermon on the Mount: **"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that anyone who looks at a woman with lustful desire has already committed adultery with her in his heart"!!!** (Matt. 5:27-28). The Lord rebukes the core of sin. He fights evil at its root! Christ condemns even this **desire** of carnal sin, which, although invisible, although inactive, nevertheless defiles the soul!

If Christ condemns the "smallest" (that is, even this desire), how much more does it go without saying that he condemns any other manifestation (whether in thought, in word, or deed) of Carnal Sin? Only insane people can dispute the fact that the Lord condemns both eye fornication (which in our days is manifested completely openly and unabashedly with pornographic magazines, pornographic tapes, etc.), masturbation, and fornication, and adultery and sodomy, and every other immorality!

Furthermore, Christ also said, **"That which comes out of the 'inside' of a person, that is what makes a person defiled and profane. From within men's hearts proceed sinful thoughts and decisions, namely adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemies, pride, foolishness. All these evil things spring from the "inside" of man and make man unclean before the eyes of God"!** (Mark 7:20-23). And again, the Lord points out that the root of our sinful actions lies deep within our hearts. Therefore, the war against sin must be waged primarily within our

hearts! In other words, Christ again condemns sins not only as “actions” but also as internal “thoughts”, “decisions”, and “desires”!

Man is unclean before God not only when he **commits** sin but even when he **meditates** on it in his mind or **desires** it in his heart! It is also worth noting that in this case, when Christ enumerates and lists twelve sinful meditations that defile the heart, the "interior" of man (i.e., "adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, ‘evil eye,’ blasphemy, pride and foolishness"), the Lord **first** puts forward "adulteries and fornications", **and then** lists all the others, i.e. "murders, thefts, covetousness, etc.". Christ does not hesitate to name and condemn the Sins of the Flesh, even when they exist as "meditations" and "desires" in the heart of man, and to give them such importance that He lists them first and foremost in His sample "catalogue"! It is also noteworthy that this list of sinful meditations, which the Lord Himself pointed out and listed, covers not only **the entire spectrum of direct** fleshly meditations (adulteries, fornications, lewdness) but also the rest of the sinful meditations, which are usually **interconnected and indirectly intertwined with fleshly falls!** That is greed, cunning, deceit, the “evil eye”, pride, irrationality, murders (such as abortions but also suicides and murders that often occur for “erotic-carnal” reasons) and thefts!

This unwavering position of Christ and, by extension, His mystical body, the Church, finds its complete application throughout the entire spectrum of

Sacred Tradition. The teaching of the holy Apostles, the writings of the holy Fathers, the lives of the Saints of the Church, the decisions of the Holy and Ecumenical Councils, the chanting and liturgical texts of our Church, Byzantine hagiography, the Holy Canons, the teachings of the holy Elders, **EVERYTHING** within the authentic life of the Church cries out in the most **categorical, clear,** and **indisputable** way that all carnal sins constitute an obstacle to salvation and are condemnable by the Lord. Whoever wants to follow Christ must strive not to fall into even these sins or, if he does fall, to follow the path of Repentance, Confession, Correction, and Return!

The Holy Scriptures Condemn ALL Sins of the Flesh, to ALL their extent!

The word “fornication” in the Holy Bible sometimes has the specific meaning of premarital relations and sometimes the generalised meaning, that is, it includes all carnal sins and deviations. For example, in the passages Matt. (5:32) and Matt. (19:9), the term “fornication” is used by the Lord obviously in its broad meaning, which includes in the specific example the meaning of adultery, that is, extramarital sexual relations. (Note: It is beyond the scope of this paragraph to expand on another, additional meaning of the term “fornication” in the Bible, where “spiritual fornication” is meant, that is, apostasy from the true God and adherence, either openly or covertly, to the variously named and multifaceted Idolatry. We will discuss this issue in the next paragraph. We also see that wonderful man of the Old Testament, Tobit, advising his son Tobias and saying these words to him - “Beware, my son, of **every kind of fornication**” (Tobit 4:12). Obviously, here too the term “fornication” is referred to in its general sense (since Tobit does not simply say "beware of fornication" but says - "Beware of **every kind of fornication!**") and therefore includes any form of carnal fall. There are still codes, as well as patristic references to the passage 1 Thess. (4:3), where before the word "fornication",

there is the antonym "all", and the passage is rendered as follows: "Abstain from **all kinds** of fornication" (1 Thess. 4:3), where again apparently the term "fornication" is referred to in its general meaning. We also mention the passages (Rev. (11, 8) and Rev. (22, 8), where the term "fornication" is understood to mean any sexually immoral person, that is, a fornicator, an adulterer, a pervert, or one who commits "unnatural" sins. Also, in the passage Jud. (7), the term "who commits fornication" (referring to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah) is explained in this same passage with the following meaning: "You go after another flesh", that is, that the inhabitants of these cities fell into homosexuality. That is, again, the term fornication is used in this passage in its broadest sense, where here precisely the meaning of immorality, of homosexuality.

So, by condemning fornication in its **general** sense, the Holy Bible consequently condemns **all** Sins of the Flesh to their **full** extent. This is also seen in various ways and clearly in many other passages of the Holy Bible, and we cite below some of them as an example:

The Apostle Paul writes, “The works of the flesh are evident, which are adultery, fornication, impurity, licentiousness…” (Gal. 5:19). Within the meaning of “works of the flesh”, the Apostle Paul also includes the Sins of the Flesh, and indeed in their full extent, naming as examples **adultery** (extramarital sexual relations), **fornication** (premarital sexual relations), **uncleanness** (masturbation), **lasciviousness** (homosexuality and all kinds of "unnatural" sexual

deviations). At the same time, he warns that **"Those who practice these sins will not inherit the Kingdom of God"** (Gal. 5:21). On the contrary, the Apostle Paul names as a "fruit of the Holy Spirit" the "antipode" of the Sins of the Flesh, namely, TEMPERANCE! (Gal. 5:23).

We remind you that we have already referred extensively to the meaning of the term **"uncleanness"**, which also includes the concept of sin "against oneself", that is, masturbation or self-satisfaction, in our First Text on Sins of the Flesh, entitled "The Bible on the Sin of Masturbation". To what we have said, then, let us be permitted at this point to add the following clarifications, taken from the famous and most soul-beneficial book “Euergetinos”:

“Some of the Fathers said that the passion of fornication is multiform - for the Apostle Paul says: Fornication, or **UNCLEANNESS**, or covetousness, let it not be named among you, as it is fitting among the Saints (Eph. 5:3). **Fornication is the bodily sin and UNCLEANNESS is the carnal sin that is caused by the touching of one’s own body”** (Evergetinos, vol. 2, Hypo. 28, Ch. 7, para. 5).

Even the saint Niketas Stethatos states that “The demon becomes a fall and a pit of mire with the flame of carnal desire and suggests wicked methods **so that the will of the flesh is done even without contact with another body** (i.e. with the sin of masturbation), about which it is shameful even to speak and think” (“Philokalia”, volume IV, chapter 2, paragraph 17).

The God-inspired pen of the Apostle Paul also urges us: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth (carnal) in their pleasures and desires: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5). And in this passage, by listing the characteristics of Carnal Sins, the Apostle Paul condemns **all** these sins in **all** their "length" and "breadth" and "depth". Thus, with the terms **"fornication"** and **"uncleanness",** the **external** manifestation of sin (i.e. the act) is condemned, and with the terms **"passion"** and **"evil desire",** the **internal** one (i.e. within the soul) manifestation of sin. Also, the term **"fornication"** means sexual sin in general when it is committed with another person (either in a heterosexual or homosexual manner). The term **"uncleanness"** means sin without another person, that is, the "alone" sin of masturbation or self-satisfaction. The term **"evil desire"** means the fall in the soul when the nous and heart consent to carnal temptations and the preoccupation and "dialogue" with impure thoughts. That is, man sins externally with actions and internally with the intellect.

The Holy Bible tells us again, "Do not be deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor men who lie with men... They will not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10). The word of God condemns fornicators and adulterers, effeminate, and homosexuals. And under the phrase **"effeminate and homosexuals",** the "unnatural" act is condemned in two versions: the feminine or passive homosexual act ("effeminate") and the active

homosexual act ("manly"). It is characteristic that the Apostle Paul, referring to "fornicators", "effeminate", and "homosexuals", entangles them with **"idolaters"** (1 Cor. 6:9). Obviously, because even those who deify the flesh and absolutize carnal pleasures (to which they are enslaved) become essentially and ultimately idolaters.

We have mentioned only a few of the many passages of the Holy Bible where God clearly and unequivocally condemns ALL carnal deviations without exception, in ALL their extent without exception: From **"evil desire"** (Col. 3:5) to **"passion"** (Col. 3:5) and even **"fornication, adultery, homosexuality"** (1 Cor. 6:9) and **"unnatural perversion"** (Rom. 1:26-27). Every Christian who cares about his salvation must abhor all Sins of the Carnal. And if he falls, he must repent, rise from his fall, confess his sins with sincerity and strive not to fall again. The infinite "Mercy of God" indeed forgives every sinner; it is enough that there is sincere Repentance.

The Connection Between Fornication and Idolatry

There is a two-way interdependence and a mystical connection between **fornication** and **idolatry**.

Idolatry (i.e. apostasy from the True God) results in involvement in carnal sins.

But also vice versa: The unrepentant fall into carnal sins leads to a separation from God, with the final outcome being one of the various forms (overt or hidden, conscious or unconscious) of idolatry!

Example from the Old Testament

Idolatry is apostasy from the True God, i.e. a denial by man of his spiritual bond with the Creator. This fact **constitutes** essentially an act of **spiritual fornication.**

The inevitable outcome of all spiritual fornication is carnal fornication. The idolatrous nations, for example, were from ancient times given to many other sins, but they were mainly and par excellence attached to carnal sins. In fact, they had become enslaved to these sins to such an extent that not only did they not even consider them as something evil and dishonourable, but, on the contrary, they even went so far as to “deify” them! And they even established “deities” who protected, patronised and taught these sins! In ancient Corinth,

for example, in that so-called "sanctuary of the goddess Aphrodite", there were dedicated more than a thousand common prostitute women who indulged with all formality in the passions of indecency! But even in cases where some restraint from carnal passions (or even the practice of virginity) was observed among idolaters (very rarely, of course, and by exception), **this happened with completely false premises!** Therefore, according to the holy Fathers of our Church, such self-control from carnal sins, which is cut off from the indispensable prerequisite of true faith and life in the Holy Spirit, is an atonic, stillborn, fruitless and adulterated state, without any essential value and without a counterpart in Heaven!

Describing the immorality that is the result of idolatry, the wise Solomon quotes the following: "It was not enough that (the idolatrous nations) were in error as to the knowledge of the True God but living in such a great spiritual war (due to) their unbridled carnal desires and passions, **(the idolaters) reach such an error that they call and think of their carnal downfalls as a supposed "state of peace"** (Wis. Sol. 14:22). And so much is the confusion in the lives of these men, driven by their furious carnal passions, that, again according to the wise Solomon: **"Neither a pure life nor pure marriages do they have... They live all 'mixed up,' with blood and murder, theft and deceit, spiritual corruption and infidelity, revolutions, oaths, persecution of peaceful people, ingratitude, spiritual miasmas, homosexual sins, disorder in marriages, adulteries and lewdness**

because idolatrous Religion is the beginning and the generative cause and the result of all evil" (Wis. Sol. 14, 24-27).

But even the chosen people of God in the years of the Old Testament, i.e. Israel, when they abandoned the True God and fell into Idolatry, were essentially committing an act of **spiritual fornication.** For, according to the Holy Scriptures, God is considered the "husband and bridegroom" of His people - and His people are considered the "bride" of God! **Abandonment of the True God by His people and their attachment to false gods constitutes an act of spiritual fornication.**

Lamenting such a fall, the prophet Jeremiah also refers to the **primary fruit** of this apostasy: **the people's descent into carnal sins. The apostate people, having first committed spiritual adultery by abandoning God, finally end up committing carnal adultery as well, debauching in the houses of immorality.** So, God says through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah: *"Your sons have forsaken me and sworn by those who are not gods. I have had enough of them; I have abhorred them because they give themselves over to idolatrous adultery and debauchery in the houses of harlots. They have become like stallions; each neigh after his neighbour's wife. Should I not justly punish them for their actions?" Or will I not turn the righteous indignation of my soul against such a nation? Thus says the Lord"!* (Jeremiah 5:7-9).

These people who have fallen into **double fornication** (spiritual and carnal) will be punished severely. God will use other foreign peoples **as His punishing instruments** for this purpose! Says the Lord, again through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah: *"Behold! I will bring a nation from afar, O people of Israel, says the Lord. I will bring a nation whose language you do not know. They are strong nations and will eat your harvest and bread! They will devour (in the war against you) your sons and your daughters. They will eat your flocks and herds; they will eat the produce of your vineyards, fig orchards and olive groves. They will thresh your fortified cities where you had mortgaged all your confidence. And they will kill the inhabitants with the sword"!* (Jer. 5, 15-17).

And indeed, for that specific historical period, to which these passages from the book of the prophet Jeremiah refer, God used the Chaldean Babylonians as a punitive nation. But the same unchanging **spiritual law** always applies! It applies throughout the course of History. So, it applies much more in the years of the New Testament. That is, it applies now. It certainly applies to the new people of God, the "New Israel," the baptised Orthodox Christians!

History repeats itself cyclically and continuously: God punishes His people pedagogically, often using for this purpose alien and pagan nations (as punishments) when His people deviate into multifaceted idolatry (spiritual

fornication) and become unrepentantly enslaved to carnal sins (carnal fornication).

Regarding the fate of idolaters falling into incurable carnal sins, the Apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Romans: *"They (the idolatrous peoples, the idolatrous nations), while proclaiming that they were wise, ultimately proved to be fools and idiots. And they exchanged the infinite and majestic glory of the incorruptible God for images depicting corruptible men, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles. Because of their disobedience and apostasy, God withdrew His Grace from them. So, they gave themselves over and became slaves to the sinful desires of their hearts, to moral uncleanness,* ***so that their bodies would be degraded by themselves!*** *They exchanged and replaced the Truth of God with the lie of idolatry. They respected and worshipped the lifeless and senseless and finite creation instead of the Creator and Maker who created it. And for this reason (that is, because He created the creation), He, the Creator and Maker, should be blessed and glorified throughout all the ages. Amen!* ***Therefore, precisely because they worshipped false gods instead of the true God, God gave them over to degrading passions of the flesh. For even their women, without feeling shame or respect for themselves, changed the natural use of their bodies into an unnatural use and were led astray into shameless acts. In the same way, the men also, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their passion for one another, men with men committing shameless and degrading acts and***

receiving from themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to retain the knowledge of God, God gave them over to a depraved mind, that is, a mind incapable of discerning right from wrong. And the result of their apostasy from the True God is to commit these shameless and shameless sins of the flesh" (Rom. 1:22-28). The Apostle Paul, in the above passage, clearly and explicitly presents the **"spiritual mechanism"** of the descent from idolatry to fornication!!!

On this subject, the Apostle Paul writes again to the Thessalonians: **"Let no one be possessed by the passion of sinful desire, as the Gentiles also are possessed by those who do not know the True God"** (1 Thess. 4:5).

And to the Ephesians, he writes: *"This I emphasise and say and testify before the Lord: You, the baptised believers, are not to walk and behave as the rest of the Gentiles live and behave, who walk according to the vanities that their minds devise.* ***These idolaters are darkened in their minds, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that prevails among them and because of the hardening and hardening of their hearts. And they have become morally insensitive so that they neither feel remorse nor perceive the grace of God. And they have given themselves over to unbridled and filthy sensuality so that they can do all kinds of uncleanness without ever being satisfied. But you, faithful Christians living close to Christ, have not been taught such things at all"!*** (Eph. 4, 17-20).

The conclusion, following the above, is obvious:

Sins of the flesh are inextricably linked to the separation from the True God.

Fornication Leads to Idolatry

Idolatry, as we have seen in the previous sections, leads to carnal sins. However, the opposite also happens: The unrepentant persistence and fall into carnal sins has as its ultimate outcome the separation from the true God and the attachment to the visible or invisible idols of the age. Essentially, fornication is already a denial of Christ, an insult to the Holy Spirit and constitutes an act of idolatry.

And fornication is **a denial of Christ** because it is a denial of the fact that, on the one hand, our bodies have been **redeemed** with the Precious Blood of the Crucified Christ (and therefore, they are not ours, but have Christ Himself as their owner), and on the other hand, our bodies are "members of Christ", and we have no right to make them "members of a prostitute"! (1 Cor. 6:15-16; 20). And fornication is also an **insult to the Holy Spirit** because the body of each of us constitutes "the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in us" (1 Cor. 6:19), and we have no right to defile such a temple with fornication! We remind and emphasise again in this regard that the word "fornication" is understood in the Holy Bible in its broad sense, so **it includes all sins of the flesh without exception!**

The fall into fornication (in its broad sense, which includes adultery and sodomy, but also any other immorality) paves the way for the gradual fall, first into a lack of faith, then into unbelief, then into the conscious denial of the true God and finally into the worship of foreign "gods", that is, false gods and idols. And there are countless examples, not only in our time but also in all centuries! We mentioned earlier the example of Judge Samson, who, due to his passion for fornication, ended up in an unimaginable downfall. We recall that even the wise Solomon, due to his fall into prostitution, eventually ended up denying the True God and worshipping idols!!! **So, too, our era, which is an extremely carnal era, has ended up being essentially idolatrous and, therefore, in the final analysis, Satanic.**

Another Example from the Old Testament

For the connection between fornication and idolatry, it is instructive to refer to a very characteristic example from the Old Testament:

As is well known, the Israelites went through terrible suffering during their forty-year journey through the desert to migrate from the land of Egypt to the Promised Land. However, they were defeated, **neither** by the terrible armies of their deadly enemies **nor** by the indescribable adversities of the desert. **Then, and only then,** were they defeated when they fell into fornication and, by natural extension, into idolatry. The cunning soothsayer Balaam showed the Moabite king, Balak, the way and method to defeat the

hitherto undefeated Israelites: To trap them first in fornication (with the allurements of Midianite women) and then, through fornication, in idolatry (with their participation in idolatrous entertainments and sacrifices).

The seer Balaam, giving this advice to King Balak, had in mind the inviolable spiritual law, which is valid throughout all the centuries of human history and according to which: **The people of God are never defeated and never destroyed, except if they fall into carnal sins, in which case they quickly fall into idolatry and subsequently into destruction!** God, who especially abhors fornication-idolatry, withdraws His Grace from His fallen and rejecting people. Then, these people are easily defeated by their enemies. And this punishment of His people, as permitted by God, constitutes His philanthropic pedagogical action for the correction, repentance and return of this apostate people!

The Israelites were indeed trapped in this infernal plan of the soothsayer Balaam. They fell into sins par excellence abominable to God. God was enraged by their fornication and idolatry. And those who sinned were punished immediately and exemplary. From this punishment, twenty-three thousand Israelites were killed in one day alone!!! Praising these events, the Apostle Paul writes the following: **"Let us never be led astray into sexual immorality, as some of them committed sexual immorality, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day"** (1 Cor. 10:8). And let us note that this divine punishment only stopped when the

righteous and zealous Phinehas punished with murder the Israelite Zimri and the Midianite Cozbi, at the very moment they were committing sexual immorality! And God not only did not condemn this murder, but on the contrary, He considered it a just murder, the fruit of divine zeal. That is why He rewarded Phinehas with the office of eternal priesthood!

The Heresy of Nicolaitanism Then and Now

This historical "precedent" of the seer Balaam's collaboration with King Balak is a model for many later historical events, where the interdependent "twin" of idolatry-fornication destroyed nations and peoples in the course of history!

Christ Himself, addressing the bishop of Pergamum in His letter, writes the following shocking words to him: *"I have a few things against you because you have there (in your diocese) those who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication. In the same way, you also have some (in your diocese) who hold the teaching of the* ***Nicolaitans****. Repent, therefore! Behold, I am coming to you quickly, and I will fight against the Nicolaitans with the sword of my mouth"!* (Rev. 2:14-16).

The heretical **Nicolaitans**, who appeared in the time of the Apostles and whom Christ himself personally rebukes here in such an emphatic manner, followed the teaching of Balaam. At this point, we also note the

remarkable fact that the Hebrew word "Bala-am", translated into Greek, is interpreted: "I conquer the people" (“Νικώ τόν λαό”) - Nicholas - Nicolaitism". And also, that the Greek word "Nicolaos" is interpreted in principle as "Victory of the people" (“Νίκη τού λαού”), but by extension it also means "Victory **against** the people" (“Νίκη **κατά** τοϋ λαού”). Thus, the magician Balaam (= Nicholas) introduced to Balak the method of falling into carnal sins so that the people of God would finally be defeated. Therefore, circumventing the law of God, the heretical Nicolaitans thought that the surrender to carnal sins not only does not constitute a fall but, on the contrary, serves to achieve a supposedly "higher spiritual goal"!!!

We must point out that the **ancient Nicolaitanism is dangerously reviving, with a new face, in our days, too!** Namely, some Christians today have the Nicolaitans as their distant spiritual ancestors. They generally have a loose concept of Orthodox morality, a low idea of temperance as a prerequisite for spiritual progress, and not only do they overlook to a dangerous degree carnal sins (which, according to the unwavering understanding of our Church throughout the centuries, constitute a deadly obstacle to salvation), but there are even cases where they pardon them entirely or “idealise” them. Thus, for example, they are heard proclaiming, either directly or indirectly, that carnal relations (premarital, extramarital, homosexual) are not only not sinful but that they can lead a person to… deification!!!

However, Christ's words about the Nicolaitans of every era are clear and categorical: **"I am coming quickly and will fight against the Nicolaitans with the sword of my mouth"!** (Rev. 2:16).

We see that Christ calls the bishop of Pergamum "to repent" (Rev. 2:16) for tolerating the Nicolaitans in his diocese and even calls him to fight against these heretics, who were causing scandal in the Church! It is noteworthy that Christ tells his bishop that if he neglects and does not repent (to take measures against the heresy of the Nicolaitans), Christ will not leave His Church exposed to the Nicolaitans. But Christ Himself will come to fight them personally!

The Lord expects His faithful to assume responsibility towards the deceived and the heretics. However, if they neglect and His people are in danger, He Himself comes directly and personally and helps and saves His Church! **"Repent, therefore! Behold, I am coming to you quickly, and I will fight against the Nicolaitans with the sword of My mouth"!** (Rev. 2:16).

Other passages from the New Testament referring to the relationship between fornication and idolatry

Christ also addresses the bishop of the Church of Thyatira in Asia Minor. He rebukes him for allowing a false prophetess to deceive Christians, telling them to **commit fornication** and **eat sacrifices to the idols**. In this case, the cursed and interdependent "twin" of

fornication and idolatry is once again used to lead the people of God into error and destruction (Rev. 2:20).

Of course, there are many other passages in the Holy Bible about the relationship between fornication and idolatry, as well as countless examples in history. An example is the passage 1 Cor. 6:9, where, crucially and most obviously, the concept of idolatry is involved in the enumeration by the Apostle Paul of characteristic carnal sins: ***"Do not be deceived! Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor men who lie with men... will inherit the kingdom of God."*** And in another passage, the Apostle Paul writes again: *"The works are evident, into which a man is led by his corrupt fleshly desire. And these evil works are fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry...."* (Gal. 5:19-20). And the Book of Revelation also writes: *"But the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and all ungodly people will have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. This is the second death!"* (Rev. 21:8). And: *"Outside are the scornful and worthless and sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices evil"* (Rev. 22:15).

The Holy Bible Reveals to Us that Carnal Sins Lead Man to Perdition

Our Lord Jesus Christ demands from Christians a much greater spiritual purity than the Law of the Old Testament required from the ancient people of Israel. Christ says: *“Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven”!* (Matt. 5:20). And he also says - *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful desire has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (Matt. 5:27-28). Immediately following this passage, Christ adds that if a person scandalises us (and therefore, there is a risk of carnal fall due to association with him), then it is in our best interest to definitively break off all relationship and communication with him, even if this person is as great, as precious and as dear to us as our "right eye" or "right hand" is!!! So punishable does our Lord Himself consider Carnal Sin that He castigates it "in the making." And He condemns even this sinful carnal desire as adultery in the heart! And He advises us immediately afterwards, in the continuation of this passage, that it is better to “put out our right eye” or “cut off our right hand” than to fall into Carnal Sin because such a sin leads to eternal Hell! The Lord

says: *"It is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into Gehenna"* (Matt. 5:30). That is, It is better for you to break off every sinful relationship that leads you to any carnal fall. Because the fall of the flesh leads to Gehenna, that is, to Hell!

And if there are some today who either feel inhibited, or are possessed by "complexes", or have prejudices in naming things by their actual name and find it difficult to speak to people about sins and hell, nevertheless the eternal Word of God, without hesitation, categorically and unequivocally, says to all people, of all times: *"Do not be deceived! Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals... will inherit the kingdom of God"* (1 Cor. 6:9-10). And he also tells us: *"The works of the flesh are evident, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness... and those who practice such things cannot inherit the kingdom of God"* (Gal. 5:19-21). And again- *"No fornicator or unclean person or covetous person, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. And let no one deceive you with empty and deceitful words! For because of these things the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience and apostasy"* (Eph. 5:5-6). And again, *"Put to death, therefore, your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience"* (Col. 3:5-6).

And again, *"Let marriage be honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: for God will judge fornicators and adulterers"* (Heb. 13:4). And again, *"Each one is moved to sin by his own evil desire. Then when that evil desire hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. And when sin is complete, it gives birth to spiritual death"* (James 1:14-15). And again, *"The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and reserves the unjust to be condemned to Hell on the day of Judgment. And above all, He will condemn to eternal Hell those who run after carnal sins with filthy desires and who* (in this way) *despise the lordship and authority of Almighty God. These are bold and ruthless in committing evil"* (2 Pet., 9-10). And again - *"Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them gave themselves over to fornication and, 'going after other flesh'* (i.e. falling into unnatural immorality)*, were destroyed by fire, so that they would remain before our eyes an example of eternal punishment, as the eternal fire of Hell will be for unrepentant sinners"* (Jude 7). And again- *"For the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters and in general for all who have been voluntarily enslaved to lies and wickedness, for all of them eternal punishment is reserved in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. And this is the Second Death* (that is, their final and irrevocable separation from God and eternal condemnation in Hell)" (Rev. 21:8).

The Holy Bible Considers the Avoidance of Carnal Sins a Prerequisite for Salvation

As mentioned previously, the commission of Carnal Sins (if not followed by sincere Repentance, Confession, Correction and Change of way of thinking and way of life), inevitably leads to separation from God and ultimately to the *"Second Death"*, which is eternal Hell.

In this paragraph we will see the avoidance of Carnal Sins, as presented in the Bible positively. That is, the conscious avoidance of Carnal Sins, that is, the spiritual struggle for Temperance, Purity and Chastity is a prerequisite for communion with God, for union with God, for the Kingdom of God, for the Vision of God and the Theosis of man!!!

That is, on the way in which the Orthodox Christian faces carnal temptations and the attitude he maintains (in parallel with other spiritual issues) on the subject of Carnal Sins, depends either his eternal condemnation or his eternal salvation! That is, while, on the one hand, the commission of Carnal Sins leads the unrepentant sinner to eternal death, on the other hand, the conscious spiritual struggle that one makes to avoid not only other mortal sins but also these, i.e.

carnal sins, is a prerequisite for eternal life, one's perfection and salvation!

The Teaching and Example of Our Lord Jesus Christ

First, it is necessary and useful to point out that our Lord Jesus Christ presents in the most emphatically manner, both with His teaching and with His exemplary life (during the thirty-three years of His first Presence on earth) the highest peak of perfect purity from every carnal passion and from every carnal sin! And as for the sexual life of believers, Christ indicated only two paths:

Either lawful marriage in the Lord (which presupposes: (a) complete purity before marriage, since all premarital sexual relations, including even those sexual relations between engaged couples, constitute fornication, and (b) fidelity between spouses, since any extramarital sexual activity constitutes adultery) - or celibacy in the Lord (which presupposes lifelong abstinence from any sexual act, i.e. lifelong virginity). And of course, Christ himself, who exemplary applied in his personal life EVERYTHING he taught, chose for himself the highest and most perfect path!!! And during the thirty-three years of His earthly life, He lived a life of supreme Purity and supreme Virginity!

So the Lord taught by the exemplary way in which He lived! He also taught by His oral preaching! Jesus says the following very clearly and vividly: *"There are*

eunuchs who were born this way from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." (Matt. 19:12).

That is, there are eunuchs who were born this way from their mother's womb. And there are those who were castrated by men. But there are also others who became voluntarily spiritually "castrated" (that is, they consciously sacrificed even this legal possibility they had, in order to satisfy the sexual urge innate in them within the limits of married life in Christ, and they chose voluntarily to follow the life of lifelong Chastity and Virginity). And these, the spiritually "castrated", chose this way of life to gain the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever can advance in this way of life, let him advance!

Let us also recall that this same All-Holy Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, although she became a mother, nevertheless constitutes at the same time an admirable and unparalleled model of perfect Ever-lasting Virginity and infinite Purity!

Undoubtedly, these supreme and absolute models of Christ and His All-Holy Mother (but also the example of the lives of countless Saints of our Church, who followed the verbal instruction and practical example of our Lord Jesus on the path of voluntary virgin life) constitute a resounding rebuke to those who want, and are systematically attempting in our

days, to introduce “new demons” into the unchanging and eternal ethos of Orthodoxy!

The Avoidance of Carnal Sins as a Prerequisite for Spiritual Life

Throughout the New Testament, the ascetic spirit of the Church is pervasive and evident, and it is completely impossible for a substantial spiritual life to exist outside of this ascetic spirit. The carnal passions, desires, and sins, the fruit of selfishness in general and of sensuality in particular (which is itself an expression of selfishness) of fallen man, are at the diametrically opposite extreme of the ascetic spirit of the Church! That is why the avoidance of Carnal Sins, not only as acts, but also as desires, constitutes a fundamental and necessary condition for the spiritual life and progress of every believer.

The antithesis of Carnal Sins is purity. Authentic Purity is based on Faith in the True God and has as its prerequisite real Humility. (Chastity without Faith in Christ is fleeting and meaningless. And chastity without Humility leads to the illegitimate state of the *“foolish Virgins”* from the Lord’s well-known parable). Authentic Purity constitutes the fertile ground on which the other virtues can also grow! No godly virtue (not even true, Christian Love) can be achieved by the faithful Christian if he undermines the foundation, which is authentic Chastity.

Life in the Holy Spirit is incompatible with Carnal Sins. The Apostle Paul writes about this: *“I tell you*

that you must live and walk according to the will of the Holy Spirit and (for this reason) *not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh... And the 'works of the flesh' are evident, namely, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, sensuality..."* (Gal. 5:16-19). And on another point: *"The carnal mind leads to spiritual death. And the understanding, which the Holy Spirit inspires, leads to true Life and Peace. For the carnal mind is enmity against God"* (Rom. 8:6-7).

Life in Christ is incompatible with Carnal Sins. Again the Apostle Paul writes: *"Put on the Lord Jesus Christ as a precious garment* (so that you may live in Christ and Christ may live in you). *Therefore, do not make provision for the gratification of the unlawful desires of the flesh"* (Rom. 13:14). And in another place, he writes: *"Consider yourselves dead indeed to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And that you may attain this goal, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey it, being carried away by the desires of the flesh"* (Rom. 6:11-12).

The ascetic spirit of the Church is identical with its Cross-resurrectional character. Those who in our days have reduced their carnal passions to "theology" are essentially, and in the last analysis, enemies of the Cross of Christ. However, the Apostle Paul writes about them: *"I weep for them who are enemies of the Cross of Christ. Their final end will be destruction. They have deified their belly. And the glory of these people is found in their vile and unspeakable deeds!*

These are those who have earthly-carnal minds" (Phil. 3:18-19). This sad and abominable situation is in complete contrast to the mindset of believers. That is why the Apostle Paul continues his speech as follows - *"But for us, our homeland and citizenship is heavenly, from which we eagerly await our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 3:20). That is, the expectation of salvation from Jesus Christ is in complete contrast to the enemies of the Ascetic Mind of the Church, those who have deified the belly and the abominations of carnal passions and sins.

Philotheism is opposed to the love of pleasure. In his second letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul, listing the characteristics of apostate people in the "last times," concludes that these people will be *"lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God"* (2 Tim. 3:4). Pleasure in general (which certainly includes sins of the flesh) works against our spiritual progress. That is why Jesus, explaining the "Parable of the Sower" to his disciples, said - *"the part of the seed that fell among thorns symbolizes those who, when they hear the word of God, accept it at first with some willingness, but then they are choked by the anxious cares and material goods and pleasures of life and for this reason they cannot progress to spiritual fruition"* (Luke 8:14).

Sins of the Flesh, even as desires, constitute a brake on our spiritual progress and an obstacle to our salvation. For example, the Apostle Peter writes: *"Beloved, I urge you* (as spiritual people and as citizens of heaven and) *as temporary and sojourners in*

this corruptible and sinful world, to abstain from fleshly desires, which war against and wage war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11). We are reminded again of Jesus' saying that *"I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (Matt. 5:28). Indeed, many holy Fathers of our Church, interpreting the words of the Lord - *"Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning"* (Auk. 12:35), say: *"Never loosen the Belt of your Sobriety, nor ever extinguish the lamp of my divine law, which enlightens you towards Temperance and mastery of carnal desire"!* And Saint Maximus the Confessor, referring to the same passage, interprets - *"Let us have our 'loins girded' and our 'lamp burning'. That is, our loins girded with Temperance. And the lamp burning through Prayer and Theoria and Love."*

So, if the Sins of the Flesh oppose and fight the soul, even if only as carnal desires, how much more is it self-evident that they damn the soul when they "materialize" and become sinful carnal acts of any form?

Avoidance of Carnal Sins as a Prerequisite for Holiness

The attainment of Holiness has as a prerequisite PURITY from all fornication, from all "defilement of flesh and spirit," from all sinful desires. The Holy Scriptures trumpets this truth in many, varied ways. For example:

(a) The Apostle Peter reminds and emphasises that for those who love God, that is, for faithful Christians, attaining the goal of Holiness is a clear commandment of God! However, a prerequisite for holiness is the overcoming of sinful desires. For this reason, the Apostle Peter writes, *"Do not be carried away by the desires you had when you were ignorant* (i.e. before you knew Christ!) *But according to Him, who called you* (the truly) *Holy* (God)*, you also become HOLY in all the manifestations of your life. For it is written* (as a Commandment of God): *Be HOLY in all your life, because I* (your God and Father) *am HOLY"* (1 Pet. 1:14-16). Therefore, God's Commandment is our Sanctification. And the prerequisite for Sanctification, according to what the Apostle Peter writes, is the abstinence from sinful desires, among which are undoubtedly included the sinful desires of the flesh! And if even only the fleshly Desires are an obstacle to our sanctification, how much more are the Acts of the flesh an obstacle?

(b) Referring to the great promises that God gave to His people, the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians: *"Since, therefore, we have these great promises of God, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, striving for holiness in the fear of God"* (2 Cor. 7:1). Obviously, according to the Apostle, the path to Holiness is inextricably linked to "cleansing ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit," so that we may become receptive to the *"great promises of God"!* That is, a prerequisite for the path to Holiness is also purity from all fleshly defilement!

(c) That Holiness cannot exist where there is *"fornication, uncleanness, greed"* is again clearly conveyed to us by the Apostle Paul, writing to the Ephesians: *"Fornication and all fleshly impurity or insatiable desire for material goods must not even be named among you! As it is fitting for people who have been sanctified by God and continue to strive for holiness"* (Eph. 5:3).

(d) The attainment of Holiness is, for believers, an obvious and indisputable Commandment of God. However, a necessary condition for Holiness is the liberation from all passionate desire and the abstinence from all Fornication. The Apostle Paul writes on this subject again - *"Truly, this is the will of God: your sanctification! Therefore, that you abstain from all acts of fornication. And that each of you should know how to keep his own body under control and to preserve it in a state of Sanctification and Honour! And not Let no one allow himself to be possessed by the passion of sinful desire, that you may not become like the pagan Nations, who do not know the true God!... For God did not call you to an impure life* (of carnal passions)*, but to a life of holiness"* (1 Thess. 4:3-5, 7).

Therefore, again, according to the word of the Holy Scriptures, and in defiance of the "Nicolaitan-minded" of any era, the goal of Holiness cannot be achieved by the faithful if there is no struggle for liberation from Carnal Passions and Sins!!!

The Avoidance of Carnal Sins as a Prerequisite for Vision of God and Theosis (=Deification)

Purity from every carnal passion and desire is not only a prerequisite for spiritual progress and the achievement of Holiness, but it is also a prerequisite for achieving the supreme goal of man's vision of God and the Theosis!!!

(a) The Lord Himself says: *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God"* (Matt. 5:8). Purity of heart is inseparably linked to purity from carnal sins. Interpreting this passage, Saint Gregory Palamas writes - *"He who is distinguished for his purity, besides being blessed by Christ, is additionally assured that he will also See God"* (Gr. Palamas, Homily 22 [*"On the Ascension"*, ed. EPE, vol. 10, Thessaloniki, 1985, pp. 58-59]).

(b) The prerequisite of the vision of God is Holiness. And the precondition for Holiness is freedom from Carnal Sins. The prerequisite, therefore, of Seeing God is freedom from Carnal Sins! The letter to the Hebrews mentions this issue: *"Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will be worthy to see the Lord"* (Heb. 12:14). And a little further on, he clarifies: *"Therefore, be careful that there is no fornicator or profane person among you…"* (Heb. 12:16).

(c) The Evangelist John, speaking of the future Glory of faithful Christians in the Kingdom of Heaven, that is, when the glorious Second Coming of Christ is

realised, emphasises both the direct Vision of God, which the faithful will enjoy ("we shall see Him as He is"!!!) and the Theosis, of which they will be worthy ("we shall be like Him"!!!). However, explicitly and unequivocally, clearly and categorically, Saint John also declares the prerequisite for achieving such Vision of God and Theosis: Purity, which most obviously includes purity from all Carnal Sin! So he writes the following in his first Catholic epistle: *"Beloved, now we are children of God. But it has not yet been revealed what we will be in the future Kingdom. For we know that when Christ appears* (at His Second Coming) *in all His Glory, then we will be like Him* (as to Glory = the Theosis of the saints) - *because we will be worthy to see Him exactly as He is* (= the Theoptic vision of the saints). *And everyone who* (believes and) *has this Hope in Him keeps himself in PURITY, just as He* (Christ) *is PURE"!!!* (1 John 3:2-3)

(d) The Apostle Peter also refers to the same subject in his second Catholic epistle. As a condition of Canonical fellowship with God, the Apostle Peter sets the avoidance of *"the corruption that is in the world through lust,"* that is, the avoidance of the world's depravity and corruption, to which sinful desire leads and enslaves. The concept of *"sinful desire"* most obviously includes carnal desire. And the idea of *"the depravity and corruption of the world"* certainly includes Carnal Sin. Here is what the Apostle Peter writes about this: *"'By these* [God's] *priceless and exceedingly great promises have been given to us, so that through them* [i.e., by being drawn and

strengthened by the promise of these promises] *you may become partakers of the Divine Nature* (= Theosis), (which you will achieve) *if you avoid the corruption and defilement of the world, in which sinful desire drives and enslaves you'* (2 Pet. 1:4).

(e) In addition, the Apostle Paul also makes similar references. Writing, for example, to the Colossians and referring to the glorious resurrection of the believers, which will occur with the Second Coming of Christ, he emphasises the following: *"When Christ* (who is the true Life, but also the Source of our life) *appears in glory at His Second Coming, then you also, together with Christ, may appear and shine with divine Glory* (= Theosis of the believers). *Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth* (which seek carnal pleasures)*, namely, fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire and covetousness, which is idolatry. For because of these sins the wrath of God is coming upon the children of disobedience"* (Col. 3:4-6). The inspired word of the Apostle Paul, therefore, sets as a necessary condition for participation in the glorious resurrection and anticipation of the coming bridegroom Christ at His Second Coming, the mortification of the Passions of the Flesh and the deliverance from the Sins of the Flesh (fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire...). And this *"mortification"* and *"deliverance"* must undoubtedly be achieved through spiritual struggle (i.e. through Repentance, Ascesis, and the Sacramental life) during the present life!!!

The Essential Difference Between Carnal Sins, Which Distinguishes Them from Other Sins

General

Every sin violates the divine commandments. It is tragic because it distances the believer from the truly good, which is Christ! Sin is eliminated through sincere Repentance and the Mystery of Confession.

Every kind of sin is terrible since it separates us from Christ. However, carnal sins have a special meaning, an essential difference from other sins, which is explained excellently by the great Apostle Paul! Emphasising this particularity of carnal sins, he writes, "*Flee fornication. Every sin, if a man does it, is outside the body; but he who commits fornication sins against his own body"* (1 Cor. 6:18). That is, *"Flee (therefore) from fornication* (here by the term fornication is meant any kind of carnal sin, as explained in previous texts)! *Every other sin that a person can commit is outside his body, but he who commits fornication defiles his own body!"*

Our Lord also emphasises this particularity of carnal sins, for example, in His famous “Sermon on the Mount”, where He allows (but does not impose)

the right to divorce not for any other sin of one of the spouses but only for the case of fornication: *"except for the cause of fornication"!* (Matt. 5:32).

Carnal Sins as an Impediment (Obstacle) to the Priesthood

Explaining and analysing this particularity of carnal sins, the blessed saint Geronda Germanus writes in one of his letters: *"The Apostle Paul reveals to us that in some mysterious and supernatural way, the body of the one who commits fornication is indelibly defiled with a permanent blemish. That is, there is an essential and profound difference between carnal and other sins. And when a person repents, confesses and changes his life, all his sins are forgiven, including, of course, the carnal ones, and when he changes his life, he can even become a saint! However, one who has fallen into grave carnal sins, such as, for example, carnal relations, either before or outside of Marriage, cannot become a priest. And he cannot become a priest because the 'vessel' of his body has become unsuitable for the ministry of the Mysteries of God. That is, like a broken vessel, which, even if you assemble and glue the pieces, you rebuild it yourself, and it becomes whole again, but it has indelible signs of the old fragments. This reassembled vessel can be used for any other work, but not for use on the Holy Altar"* (from the book, *Geronda Germanos Stavrovouniotis (1906-1982)*, 2nd edition, p. 203).

The Purity of the Body as a Sacrifice to God!

The Apostle Paul teaches us again - *"But the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body"* (1 Cor. 6:13). That is, God did not give us our body to use in carnal perversions (i.e. in "relationships" outside of blessed Marriage), but to sanctify it, fulfilling with our body the holy commandments of God. This struggle, which is equivalent to a sacrifice to God, is considered necessary within the framework of Orthodox Christian asceticism. This is because the goal of Christian life is to become partakers of divine Grace. And this Grace of God sanctifies not only the soul but also the body of the believer struggling in the Lord, the whole person, i.e. man! A more tangible proof of this fundamental truth of our Faith is the holy relics of our Saints, which often exude an indescribable fragrance; sometimes they are fragrant, sometimes they remain miraculously incorruptible but consistently emit in various ways the divine Grace that dwells in them.

The Resurrection of the Bodies

Our Creed ends, as is well known, with the phrase, *"...I await the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come."* So great, then, is the value of the human body (in defiance of every deluded “sophist,” “Neoplatonist,” “pagan,” “philosopher,” and any other older or newer heretic or other non-religious person who devalues the human body as an integral part of the entire psychosomatic existence of man), that this very

creation of God, namely the human body, is destined to be resurrected glorious and "spiritual," that is, governed by the laws, not of corruption and death, which are in force now (after the fall), but governed by the laws of the Holy Spirit, which will be in force in the "New Creation," that is, the glorious establishment of the Kingdom of God after the common Resurrection!

The Apostle Paul emphasises the glorious resurrection of bodies, writing to the Corinthians: *"But God both raised up the Lord and will raise us up by his power"* (1 Cor. 6:14).

The meaning of the Apostle's words, concerning the entire context of the passage, is as follows: Since our bodies are not temporary but destined for eternity, for this very reason, we must use them in a sanctifying manner with our good deeds. For example, this is why believers in prayer "force", as it were, the body to participate in the Prayer as well, through standing, "prostrations", etc. Therefore, we should not use our bodies to commit sin. Being a spiritual-physical unity and whole, man often sins, not only "spiritually" but also "physically". However, the repentant and struggling believer also performs virtue, not only "spiritually" but also "physically", that is, with the body's participation.

The body of every believer incorporated into the Church is not "his own" but belongs to Christ!

"For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27), writes the Apostle Paul to the Galatians. That is, those of us who were baptised into the Name of Christ have put on Christ! With the Mystery of Holy Baptism, we have become "members of Christ." Most skillfully, Paul presents another fundamental theological reason for which the so-called sins of the flesh become entirely unacceptable for every believer; he writes to the Corinthians: *"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Have I then the right to take something that is a member of the body of Christ and make it a member of the body of a prostitute? Never such a thing! Or do you not know that he who is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as the Holy Scripture says, the two will become one body. But whoever is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him."* (1 Cor. 6:15-17).

The Apostle Paul undoubtedly tells us: Choose and take either Christ or (God forbid!) fornication. These two are diametrically and completely opposite! They can never be reconciled with each other in anything! It is impossible for someone to fornicate without repentance and, at the same time, have the illusion that he can continue to be a member of the mystical Body of Christ!

"Flee From Fornication"

While the Bible clearly and openly teaches us to *"flee from fornication"* (1 Cor. 6:18) (= away from fornication, i.e. carnal relations outside the blessed

Mystery of Marriage), today, however, in the alienated society in which we have come to live, blessed continence, which can lead us to Christ, is considered a disadvantage! And sin is regarded as a supposed "achievement", such as sexual relations outside of marriage, various carnal "natural" and "unnatural" deviations, etc. The usual justifications put forward for this soul-destroying shame are usually the following: *"Everyone does it like that", "Why should you deprive yourself of such pleasure?" "How can you accept that you are not intelligent and progressive like others?" "Why do you remain backwards without having a 'bond' yourself?" "How can you endure loneliness without having a 'partner' yourself?" "don't you know that medicine considers abstinence harmful?"* and other similar diabolical *"arguments"!* And unfortunately, many victims follow the easy and broad path of destruction! We prefer to "forget" that Orthodoxy is an asceticism, a narrow and sorrowful path, a cutting off of the will, humility in Christ, love, etc., which the countless multitude of Saints of our Church have followed throughout the centuries! Meanwhile, the "other path" of the "world" (if there is no repentance and change, of course) leads to the precipice of eternal loss.

The Human Body of the Believer is a Temple of the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul also writes: *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you, whom you have received from God, and therefore you are not your own?"* (1 Cor. 6:19). With

the transcendent fact that the body of every baptised believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit, it is utterly impermissible to defile, to pollute with our carnal sins such a temple of infinite value! If it is inconceivable for a believer to defile with any impurities a conventional temple, built by human hands, with perishable building materials (stones, iron, cement, plaster, wood, etc.), how much more is it impermissible for a believer to pollute his body? This, which is, on the one hand, created by God and, on the other hand, has the destiny to be resurrected when the Second Coming of Christ takes place, and which is destined to function as a temple of the Holy Spirit, not only in the present (biological) life but also in eternity!

Man Does Not Belong to Himself but to His Creator!

Continuing his inspired words regarding the theological dimension of the human body, the Apostle Paul writes: *"You do not belong to yourselves. God bought you with a price"!* (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Our bodies have been redeemed with the Precious Blood of the Crucified Christ. Therefore, they do not belong to us. Still, their owner is Christ himself, who sacrificed Himself, and indeed with the most painful and shameful death (since, as stated in the Old Testament, "everyone who hangs dead on a tree [of the cross] is cursed by God" [Deut. 21:23], i.e., who has been condemned to death on the cross). And this, to provide us with the possibility of the resurrection of our own bodies at His glorious Second Coming to earth! Therefore, we have no right to desecrate and pollute

with our carnal sins that which essentially and ontologically does not belong to us but constitutes a precious property of the lovingly Incarnated God-man Christ! And since Christ gave Himself up to the terrible Cross, the challenge for every believer is undeniable: Either we honour the Cross of Christ, fighting in the holy struggle of the purity of our soul and body, according to the word of God, or we unrepentantly abandon ourselves to the descent of carnal sins, thus blatantly despising the sacrifice of Christ for our sake, that is, insulting His sacrifice on the Cross!

Since Christ redeemed each of us with a priceless price, with His honest and immaculate blood, which He shed on the Cross, freeing us from the bonds of the devil, the evil world, our passions and sins, it is unthinkable for us to deny and betray for the sake of the false, soul-destroying, body-destroying and human-destroying pleasure of carnal sins the possibility of our true freedom, which Christ gave us! This is why the great Apostle Paul emphatically implants in our "being" the reminder: *"Flee fornication... for you were bought with a price."* That is, "Flee from fornication! ... For Christ redeemed you from eternal slavery (of your entire existence, soul and body) by paying (instead of us) the hefty price, sacrificing Himself on the Cross!

God Is Glorified with Our Entire Psychosomatic Existence If We Avoid Carnal Sins

"Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20). That is, "Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are His." The Church fights every dualism that belittles the body in relation to the spirit. And this passage of Holy Scripture is indicative. Both the body and the spirit of man are both creations of God. With the expected resurrection of the dead, which has now become ontologically possible with the Resurrection of Christ, the whole man is glorified, both soul and body!

Since then, the body is destined for eternity, just as the spirit is; for this very reason, the Apostle Paul describes in a condensed manner, but very clearly, the most profound theological and ecclesiological reasons, for which every fornication is, not simply any sin, but in reality a fall, which on the one hand touches the transcendence of the whole man as a psychosomatic unity, and on the other hand profoundly affects the existence of every man, beyond the grave, in the ages of ages!

For this reason, the Apostle Paul advises avoiding all carnal sin, both physically and spiritually. In this way, genuine praise is given to the true God, not only with the lips but also with the mind, the heart, the feelings, and the will. That is, with the purity from the depths of existence, both bodies and souls!

We must indeed glorify God, both with our body and spirit, that is, with our entire psychosomatic existence, because we do not belong to ourselves but to God! *"Therefore, glorify God in your body and in*

your spirit, which belongs to God"! (1 Cor. 6:20). And even more, *"the body was not created for fornication, but for glorifying the Lord! And the Lord will glorify our bodies"* (1 Cor. 6:13). So, God is glorified by purity, by self-control, by fidelity in Marriage and by virginity in Christ and according to Christ!

Everyone Can Be Saved Through the Mysteries of the Church!

The Apostle Paul is not content only to harshly condemn the various carnal sins, revealing this issue's theological and ecclesiological depth. Still, at the same time, he also offers the sure hope of salvation through our incorporation into the Church through holy Baptism, through the Mystery of Repentance and Confession, and through the personal struggle for our sanctification! *"Do not be deceived! Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor covetous, nor thieves, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you at one time! But you were washed (from sin), you were sanctified, you were justified by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the power of the Spirit of God"* (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Are Carnal Relations Permitted Without an Ecclesiastical Marriage?

In speaking with the Samaritan woman, our Lord (John 4:16-18) clearly indicates that He does not recognise and does not accept carnal relations outside

of lawful (ecclesiastical) marriage. (That is, premarital or extramarital carnal relations, whether supposedly "out of love" or because "they intend to marry one day", or because "they are engaged", or for reasons of "bond", or for any other pretext).

We quote in simpler language an excerpt from a text by the blessed saint Geronda Epiphanios Theodoropoulou: *"The Samaritan woman's cohabitation with a man is adulterous and not lawful. That is, the man with whom she is married is not 'her husband,' according to the order that God established from the beginning, establishing marriage as a natural institution and bond until, in the New Economy (i.e., the Church), Christ elevated marriage to a Most Holy Mystery. Neither was the Samaritan woman 'his wife.' They were not legal spouses but were a couple of adulterers! Their cohabitation and relationship without a 'blessed marriage' cannot, in the least, change the situation from illegitimate to legitimate. The word of the Lord sounded like thunder to the Samaritan woman: 'He, with whom you now live in carnal relations, is not your legal husband!' So, what other proof do we have of the fact that our Lord, even in this passage of the Holy Bible, does not recognise carnal relations outside of marriage blessed by God? Therefore, the "political" so-called "marriage" is not "marriage" for the Church. Such a cohabitation is without the presence of the grace of the Mystery of the Church. However, the Samaritan woman is a well-intentioned being. Upon hearing the words of Jesus, she did not react arrogantly and selfishly but, on the*

contrary, demonstrated genuine Faith and Humility! After hearing the corrective-therapeutic words that Christ addressed to her, she abandoned the illegal 'marriage'. She did not even return to her 'husband'. She left her pitcher at the well and followed the Lord. She was baptised. She received the name Photini and eventually became the Holy Great Martyr Photini the Samaritan!"

***** Someone asked Abba Poimen - "If a person sins and repents, does God forgive him?" And the Elder answered him - *"God commanded people to do this, that is, to forgive others. So, will not He forgive much more? For He commanded the Apostle Peter to forgive up to seventy-seven times (Matt. 18:22) those who sinned and repented."*

***** Another asked the same Elder – "What is repentance for sin?" And the Elder said – *"Not to commit it again! That is why the righteous were called blameless; they ceased to sin and became righteous."*

***** Someone said to Abba Poimen – "My body has weakened, but my passions do not weaken." And the Elder answered him, *"The passions are like thorny plants. This means that just as he who wants to uproot these plants wounds his hands and bleeds, so too he who wants to uproot his passions needs sweat and labour."*

***** Abba Anoub asked Abba Poimen about the impure thoughts that the human heart gives birth to, and he answered, *"Does the axe have any value in*

itself, apart from the one who uses it? So do not cooperate with thoughts, despise and dismiss them, and impure thoughts will become inactive (just as the axe becomes useless when you do not use it).”

* A brother said to Abba Poimen: "If I see a brother about whom I have heard that he has sinned, I do not want to put him in my cell. But I am grateful to him if I see another good deed." The Elder answered him: *"If you do a small kindness to a good person, double it to the one about whom you have heard (that he has sinned) - for he is sick (spiritually). Thus, will God have mercy on you, too!"*

Our holy Father John writes in the “Ladder” about the essential peculiarity of carnal sins:

* *“Every other sin that a man can commit is outside the body, but he who commits fornication defiles his own body”* (1 Cor. 6:18). *I, therefore, inquire why we are accustomed to saying, regarding any other sin, only that people have erred. In contrast, when we hear that someone has committed fornication, we do not simply say that he erred, but we say with sorrow: so-and-so has fallen.”* (Step 15:43, 44).

* “*A certain learned man posed a most difficult problem to me: ‘What sin,’ he said, ‘is graver than all, except murder and denial?’ And when I answered him, ‘to fall into heresy,’ he asked me again: And how is it that the Orthodox Church accepts heretics, and after the sincere anathematisation of their heresy, makes them worthy of Holy Communion, while whoever has*

committed fornication, it accepts after his confession and correction, but deprives him for a time of the Immaculate Mysteries, according to the provisions of the Apostolic Canons?' And while I was astonished by the question, the unsolved problem remained unresolved". (Step 15:44).

* *"Do not be deceived, O young man! It happened to me to see some praying wholeheartedly for persons whom they "loved" (with sinful love) very much. And while the spirit of fornication prompted them to such prayer, the unfortunate ones thought that they were fulfilling the law of love!" (Prayer) for other sins of people is obligatory. Still, prayer for persons for whom the praying person has an [improper, sinful] sympathy hides great dangers!)* (Step 15:46),

* *"In beginners, falls, as a rule, occur from gluttony. In the intermediate ones from pride. But in those who approach perfection, the falls into carnal sins occur exclusively because of condemnation" (There is, therefore, a mystical relationship between carnal sins and condemnation)* (Step 15:15).